



I R A Q

TRIP REPORT

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AVAILABLE ONLINE AT: [HTTP://WWW.HOUSE.GOV/WOLF](http://www.house.gov/wolf)

I just returned from spending two days in southern Iraq. I was there Sunday, May 25, and Monday, May 26. I also spent a day, Tuesday, May 27, in Kuwait, where I met with Kuwaiti government officials, members of the U.S. military, State Department officials and staff from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

This report provides details of my trip and makes a number of recommendations concerning the reconstruction of Iraq.

Let me begin by praising the efforts of all the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and members of the Coast Guard who served—or are continuing to serve—in Operation Iraqi Freedom. They are the best of the best. I cannot emphasize enough how good a job they have done and continue to do. They and their families all have made tremendous sacrifices.

I was particularly impressed with the soldiers and Marines I talked with who are reservists called to active duty. Many left good jobs and/or school to



Health care in southern Iraq is improving, but there is still a long way to go.



To help get life back to normal in towns like Al Kut (above), ensuring the security of the Iraqi people and the coalition forces must be priority one.

serve. Their professionalism and attitude were exceptional.

I also want to express my heartfelt sympathy to all the families who lost loved ones during the war. We will never forget—and will always be grateful for—their service to the cause of freedom.

All the soldiers and Marines I met in Iraq are doing an incredible job under extremely difficult conditions. The heat in Iraq and Kuwait is oppressive and will only get worse as summer approaches. It was over 100 degrees both days I was in Iraq. I was told that the temperature can sometimes reach 140 degrees in July and August. The living conditions for most of the soldiers that I saw were primitive.

REASON FOR TRIP

I believed it was important to go to Iraq to get a first-hand look at the reconstruction efforts that are under way and to assess the humanitarian assistance that is being provided. I crossed over the border into Iraq from Kuwait. I visited the towns of Nasiriyah, Al Kut and Al Amarah.

I spent the night in Nasiriyah—where some of the heaviest fighting during the war took place—then traveled northeast to Al Kut on Monday morning. From there I headed south to Al Amarah then passed through the outskirts of Basra on the way back to the Iraq-Kuwait border.

During the trip I talked with a number of Iraqis, visited two hospitals, including the one from which Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch was rescued, met with military officials, and spent a considerable amount of time with representatives from several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Iraq. I saw what was left of one of Saddam Hussein's infamous torture chambers, heard ghastly stories about the brutality of Saddam's regime and was told of mass graves. I saw paintings, posters and statues of Saddam defaced or destroyed. His name was scratched off or punched out from signs on buildings bearing his name. I saw "No to Saddam Yes for Bush" spray painted in green letters on the side of a building just after crossing over the border from Kuwait.

I saw very sick children, many of whom are probably now dead, and was amazed by the bravery of a young boy I saw in the emergency room of a hospital. He had been brought in just minutes before I arrived. He had been playing outdoors and came in contact with either a land mine or unexploded ordnance. His face was severely burned and a piece of shrapnel was deeply embedded in his right eye. Blood was streaming down his face onto his chest. He looked to be about 10-years-old. He never cried.

I saw the results of precision-guided bombing. It is amazing. In Nasiriyah, I was taken by what was left of the former home of a Baath Party leader. The house was sandwiched between several other homes. While it was reduced to rubble, none of the surrounding houses appeared to sustain any damage.

I was told that Radio Sawa, a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week Arabic-language network whose programming originates from the United States and



Life in southern Iraq is tough. Poverty is widespread. Trash and rubble litter the streets.



Posters, paintings and statues of Saddam Hussein throughout Iraq have been destroyed by the Iraqi people. This painting of Saddam was defaced in Al Kut.

is broadcast in the region, is very popular. The network plays a mix of the best Western and Arabic pop music and has balanced up-to-the-minute news and analysis. It also broadcasts features on a variety of political and social issues and does in-depth reports on the development of freedom and democracy in the Middle East.

Some were skeptical of the success of the broadcasts. But I was told by locals that since Radio Sawa went on the air in spring 2002, few listen to Arabic radio stations anymore.

TOUGH CONDITIONS

Life in southern Iraq is difficult. Poverty is widespread. Buildings are dilapidated. Trash and rubble litter the streets. Many of the trees have been cut down and used for firewood because propane was so scarce under Saddam's rule. The water is putrid.

Saddam Hussein did everything in his power over the last decade to make life in towns like Nasiriyah as miserable as possible because of the uprisings fol-

lowing the first Gulf war. It was their punishment for opposing his iron-fisted rule. Thousands of men who defied Saddam literally disappeared and have never been heard from since; they are presumed dead.

The conditions in the two hospitals I visited—while dramatically improved over the last month—are pitiful. At what was once the Saddam General Hospital in Nasiriyah—now just called the General Hospital—there are no screens on the doors. As a consequence, any time a door is opened, bugs—particularly flies—come streaming in. Flies were swarming over two of the empty beds in the emergency room.

There is no monitoring equipment for the beds in the emergency room. In fact, I saw very little monitoring equipment anywhere in the hospital. Imagine walking into your local hospital and not seeing a machine to monitor your pulse or take your blood pressure. Medicine also is in short supply. It was depressing.

Security in Iraq remains a real concern, not only for coalition forces but for the general public. Lives continue to be lost. Whether I was talking to military officials, NGOs or Iraqis, security was the first issue they always addressed. Looting is still a problem in some parts of the country and I heard several stories about robberies and car-jackings. I was told MPs in Nasiriyah successfully stopped a car jacking the Sunday night I was there.

Many Iraqis are afraid to go back to work for fear their home may be looted or that they may be robbed. Several people told me that hearing random gun fire after sundown has become commonplace.

The NGOs that I talked with said that it was not unusual for their vehicles to be pelted with rocks in some parts of the country. Civilian convoys are threatened. No one travels after sunset.

One reason for the lawlessness is that before the war started, Saddam Hussein opened all the prisons, releasing both political prisoners and hardened criminals. Murderers. Rapists.



Rebuilding Iraq for its future generations will not happen overnight.

Robbers. Getting these criminals back behind bars is critical.

BLUEPRINT FOR IRAQ

In order for the United States to win the peace in Iraq it is imperative that we restore law and order. We need to redouble our efforts to ensure that Iraq is safe.

In "Play to Win," the final report of the bipartisan Commission on Post-

Conflict Reconstruction, security is one of the four "pillars" of post-conflict reconstruction. The other three are: justice and reconciliation; economic and social well being, and governance and participation.

This comprehensive report published in January 2003 by the Association of the United States Army and the Center for Strategic and International Studies should serve as the blueprint for the reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Members of the commission include retired military officers, representatives from the NGO community and international aid organizations, former high-ranking executive branch officials, and Members of Congress with expertise in foreign affairs.

Among those on the commission are: Dr. John Hamre, former deputy secretary of defense; Richard Holbrooke, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; Gen. Gordon Sullivan, former chief of staff of the U.S. Army; Senator Pat Roberts, chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and Rep. Doug Bereuter, chairman of the House Subcommittee



This is what is left of one of Saddam Hussein's infamous torture chambers in Nasiriyah. It was destroyed during the war.

on Intelligence Policy and National Security. (I, too, was a member of the commission, although I did not have a leading role.)

The report makes 17 recommendations “on what the United States will have to do to enable itself to help countries successfully rebuild themselves following conflict.”

I have asked the commission to provide me with 535 copies of the report so I can share it with my colleagues. It

also can be found on the Internet at <http://www.pcrproject.org>

Below is an excerpt from the report on the issue of security:

“Security is the sine qua non of post-conflict reconstruction. Though every case is different, there is one constant—if security needs are not met, both the peace in the given country and the intervention needed to promote it are doomed to fail. Unless comprehensive security needs are addressed

up front, spoilers will find the weak areas and retain leverage to affect the political outcomes, vitiating the peace. While peace is essential, it never will be one hundred percent guaranteed and the perfect must not become the enemy of the good. In order to achieve acceptable levels of security, ‘coalitions of the willing’ and the UN peacekeeping operations need coherent military leadership and core troops from a lead nation that provide the backbone of the operation. The international community must also enhance its ability to deploy civilian police to address temporary needs. In addition, efforts to design and reconstruct local security institutions, including both military and police, must begin early in the process.”

I believe the Bush Administration would be well served to have several members of the commission visit Iraq to measure how the reconstruction efforts match the recommendations in the report. Dr. Hamre and Gen. Sullivan, who served as the co-chairmen of the commission, could be charged with selecting which members should go. There should be no objection to this recommendation. Each of the commission members has a distinguished and extensive background. Their insight and observations could prove to be invaluable.

In addition to members of the Commission on Post-Conflict Reconstruction visiting Iraq, members of Congress should visit as well. In my opinion, it would make sense for the chairman and ranking member—or their designees—of the following committees to travel to Iraq:

- House and Senate Armed Services committees
- House International Relations Committee



Improving health care for mothers and infants will be particularly important as the reconstruction of Iraq moves forward. Medicine is in short supply.

- Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- House and Senate Appropriations committees

Members should spend time in all parts of Iraq. Obviously safety and security are issues that must be considered, but the trips could be made in small groups without publicity. The only way to get a feel for what is happening is by visiting the towns and cities and talking to the people living there.

In addition to meeting with military commanders, these members or their designees should meet with Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, the civilian administrator of Iraq, and other officials from the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)—now called the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)—USAID officials, and representatives from the NGO community and other international aid organizations. Meetings with Iraqi citizens also should be set up.

Congress needs to be involved in—and kept up-to-date on—the reconstruction of Iraq. Clearly, there is a great deal at stake for the United States in Iraq. The reconstruction effort is going to be long and arduous. No one is naive enough to believe it is going to happen overnight. Nor is anyone naive enough to think that it is not going to come without problems and challenges.

Yet, if Congress is not involved, the Bush Administration is going to be left without a partner in rebuilding Iraq. The Congress is the Bush Administration's greatest ally. There should be nothing to hide. And after my trip, I believe there is great deal to tell—much of it positive.

We must, however, be realistic. We have a long, long way to go in the re-



IMC doctor Jamil Bayyam (left) treats a young Iraqi boy who was injured by a land mine or unexploded ordnance. The boy's face was severely burned.

construction of Iraq. We have won the war, and we must be careful not to lose the peace. Failure cannot be an option. A well developed plan for reconstruction is imperative and congressional involvement will help the Bush Administration from steering off course as it works to rebuild Iraq.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are based on my observations and conversations with the people I met during the course of my visit. Some already have been addressed in greater detail in the body of the report.

SECURITY

Security is priority one.

While the coalition forces have made great strides in trying to improve

security in recent weeks, there is still a long way to go. Security is the linchpin to winning the peace in Iraq. That means security for coalition forces. Security for the NGOs. Security for the contractors. And security for the Iraqi people so they can go about their life. The gun turn-back program recently announced by Ambassador Bremer is a positive step but many are concerned that people may turn in only one gun and keep two. In addition to concerns about personal safety, looting remains a problem. I was told that looters continue to target electrical substations in southern Iraq, stealing the copper wire to sell on the black market. These substations provide much of the power for Baghdad. Coalition forces should provide security until it can be provided by the Iraqis.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Re-establishing a fair and just judicial system in a timely fashion is critical. Figuring out what to do with locals who break the law—such as looters—but are not a threat to U.S. security must be addressed as soon as possible. The laws need to be clear and must be enforced.

‘PLAY TO WIN’

“Play to Win,” the final report of the bipartisan Commission on Post-Conflict Reconstruction, should be used as the blueprint for rebuilding Iraq.

The report, released in January, was produced jointly by the Association of the United States Army and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Its 17 recommendations provide an excellent model to follow. The commission is made up of 27 distinguished individuals with extensive experience in government, the military, non-governmental organizations and international aid groups. It met throughout 2002 to “consider recommendations that surfaced over two years of research, expert working groups, and vetting with current policy-makers and practitioners.” The report can be found on the Internet at <http://www.pcrproject.org>

COMMISSION VISITS

A select group of the Commission on Post Conflict Reconstruction should travel to Iraq.

The panel’s co-chairmen, Dr. John Hamre, former deputy secretary of defense, and Gen. Gordon Sullivan, former chief of staff of the U.S. Army—should appoint a select number of commissioners to travel to Iraq to assess how the reconstruction efforts are going. Their assessment—a second opinion, if you will—would be impartial and could prove to be invaluable.



This is the sand-filled bed from which Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch was rescued. Sand helps prevent bed sores.

They should travel in a small group with a military escort to ensure their safety.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Small groups of members of Congress should make the trip to Iraq. They should go without publicity to ensure their safety and the safety of those who would be providing protection. Their visit to learn more about what is happening in the country and what it is going to take to rebuild the country would be helpful in their oversight responsibility in Congress. The chairmen and ranking members—or their designees—of the House and Senate Armed Services committees, Appropriations committees and International Relations/Foreign Relations committees should consider going.

In addition to meeting with military commanders, the members should meet with Ambassador Bremer and other officials in the Office of Recon-

struction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), USAID officials, representatives from the NGO community and other international organizations, and Iraqi citizens.

PARTNERING WITH IRAQI PEOPLE

Every effort must be made to involve the Iraqi people in rebuilding their country, from governance to security to repairing the country’s infrastructure. The Iraqi people must be an equal partner in the process.

“Play to Win” is instructive on this point: “. . . every effort must be taken to build (or rebuild) indigenous capacity and governance structures as soon as possible. Leadership roles in the reconstruction effort must be given to host country nationals at the earliest possible stage of the process. Even if capacity is limited, host country representatives should chair or co-chair pledging conferences, priority-setting meetings, joint assessment of needs, and all other relevant processes.”

American companies awarded contracts to rebuild Iraq’s infrastructure should hire locals whenever possible. There are many skilled and educated people in Iraq and they should be tapped to help rebuild their country.

RECONSTRUCTION SUPPORT

The sooner the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance—now the called Coalition Provisional Authority—is completely operational the better. Every effort should be made to ensure that Ambassador Bremer and his staff have the necessary tools and resources to successfully complete the job.

PROVINCIAL OFFICERS

The military’s Civil Affairs detachments in Iraq have worked diligently



U.S. soldiers serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom are doing an outstanding job.

to help restore order and are making more and more progress every day. Consideration should be given to providing the officer in charge of each of the 18 provinces in Iraq with access to a ready cash account—perhaps up to \$500,000—so they can more quickly hire translators, laborers and other locals to assist in their efforts in putting together a government without having to get every expenditure signed off by headquarters or Washington.

The money also could be used to purchase goods and services in-country, such as generators, pumps or even a trash truck, on a more timely basis rather than waiting for it to be brought in by coalition forces.

Government on any level needs money to operate. Clearly, this money must be accounted for, but it would greatly assist in the efforts to rebuild the country.

CIVILIAN EXPERTISE

Consideration also should be given to helping augment the work of the Civil Affairs detachments by bringing

in U.S. civilians with expertise in local government, such as county administrators and city managers, as well as experts in agriculture and public works. In each of the 18 provinces, the head of each military Civil Affairs detachment acts like a governor. They need experts—much like a cabinet—at their disposal who can advise them on issues like banking, education, public works and health care.

For example, the National Association of County Administrators could assist in rotating in civilian administrators to work with the military and local Iraqis in setting up and running local governments. There could be one for each of the 18 provinces. Some of the leading agriculture companies in the country could lend their expertise on irrigation and production. The head of the public works department in any large county or city in the country would bring an inordinate amount of experience to the table. There also is a great deal of expertise in the federal government which can be tapped. Again, these individuals would work

hand-in-hand with the military and the locals.

POST-COMBAT SKILLS

The U.S. military has to begin thinking about training more of its soldiers for a post-combat environment to help fill any void until the necessary Civil Affairs and Military Police units can be put in place. I realize this is asking our war fighters to take on a new mission, but in this new world environment, I believe this skill is necessary.

COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

Communications and communication systems remain a problem for both the military and the aid organizations working in Iraq. I was told that not all of the Civil Affairs detachments are readily able to communicate with each other or with the Humanitarian Assistance Center in Kuwait, which is coordinating all the civil affairs and humanitarian assistance in Iraq. Contacting U.S. officials in Baghdad also is problematic. I was told part of the problem is that most Civil Affairs de-



Iraqis should play a leading role in helping rebuild their country.

tachments are made up of reserve units which do not always have compatible communications equipment. This needs to be addressed. It is imperative that all 18 provinces be linked with each other and headquarters. Congress should provide DOD with the necessary funding to ensure that these detachments have radios, computers and other communications equipment that are interoperable.

Aid organizations also are encountering problems communicating with their staff in southern Iraq because telephone and other data transmission lines have yet to be repaired. This presents a problem, especially for sharing data and supplying information.

IRAQ'S BANKING SYSTEM

The issue of Iraqi currency must be dealt with immediately. Many people in Iraq will not accept payment with the old regime's currency. The World Bank should provide its expertise in helping get Iraq's banking system back up and running.

THE STORY OF DEMOCRACY

The State Department working with the National Endowment for Democracy and other groups with similar expertise should develop a program on democracy and how a democratic government works.

I was told that Iraqis watch a great deal of television. Perhaps whatever program is developed should be put on videotapes and tailored to specific age groups so that all Iraqis can understand the democratic process. This program must be made available to the Civil Affairs units in each of the 18 provinces. I understand money already has been appropriated and some contracts have been let. This program must be put into place as soon as possible.

A pro-democracy newspaper also should begin to be published on a daily basis in Iraq.

ORDNANCE REMOVAL

Finding and removing unexploded ordnance needs to be a priority. Sadly, many Iraqi children have been seriously hurt by exploding weapons while playing outdoors. When I visited the General Hospital in Nasiriyah, a young boy had just been brought into the emergency room after either a mine or unexploded ordnance blew up near him. He was severely burned and there was a piece of shrapnel in his right eye. Clearing this ordnance will be a long and laborious process.

no medicine and the conditions inside are deplorable. One NGO that is providing invaluable assistance is the International Medical Corps (IMC). Their doctors, nurses, nutritionists and other health care professionals are making great strides in assessing the health care needs of Iraq. They are also helping provide care. I was told that IMC has helped distribute more than two tons of donated medicine to hospitals and clinics in southern Iraq. There is concern, however, that diseases like malaria and visceral leishmaniasis—also called Dum Dum Fever or Black Fever—could ravage the region this summer because no spraying was done this spring to kill the mosquito



The future of these Iraqi children living in Nasiriyah will depend on the success of the reconstruction effort.

HEALTH CARE

While great progress has been made to improve health care in southern Iraq since the war ended, there is still a long way to go. While the major hospitals in southern Iraq used to bear Saddam Hussein's name—and are all identically constructed—there was little or

larvae or sand flea larvae. Bites from sand fleas are the cause of visceral leishmaniasis, which attacks internal organs. This disease has an 80 percent fatality rate for young children unless treated with a 21-day shot routine. Cholera is another concern. Area hospitals and American drug companies should work

with medical NGOs in Iraq to ensure they have an adequate drug supply and the necessary equipment to provide medical services. Any assistance must be coordinated with NGOs on the ground so there is not any duplication of efforts or unnecessary equipment donated.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Improving health services for women will be particularly important as the reconstruction of Iraq moves forward. More focus is needed on pre- and post-natal care. The surgical capabilities in the country are seriously lacking. Special instruments for delivering babies and performing cesarean sections are needed. So are the proper medications for delivery. More nurses also need to be trained.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

As a new government is established in Iraq, care must be given to protect the rights of religious minorities. I urge the Bush Administration to develop a strategy and governance structure within the new Iraqi government to ensure that the hard won freedoms of the Iraqi people also will include the right and protection of religious liberties.

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR TROOPS

The troops serving in the Gulf region are outstanding. The ones I spoke with were highly skilled, highly motivated and extremely professional. They all have made great sacrifices to serve their country. In turn, we should do everything possible to make sure their morale remains high. Hearing from home is a big part of that. Congress should provide DOD with the necessary resources to ensure these service men and women serving in the



This room in the basement of the then-Saddam General Hospital in Nasiriyah was said to have been used as a base of operations during the war for Ali Hassan Majeed, a military commander better known as "Chemical Ali." Medical supplies are now stored in the room.

Gulf—and around the globe for that matter—are able to get messages from home, whether by phone, e-mail or regular mail.

COMMENDATION FOR KUWAIT

Congress should approve a resolution thanking the government and people of Kuwait for their assistance in helping to provide humanitarian relief to Iraq. The Kuwaiti government has provided millions of dollars in assistance, both in-kind and in material goods. The United States' Humanitarian Operations Center is run out of a former government facility in Kuwait City.

NGOs VALUABLE ROLE

The NGOs on the ground in the region also have done a tremendous job responding to the needs of the Iraqi people. From helping provide food to medical care to caring for orphans,

their experience and expertise has proven invaluable. I was told some of the NGOs in the region are concerned that the humanitarian assistance is being coordinated by the U.S. military. Some of their misgivings may be justified. As the ORHA/CPA gets up and running, however, I suspect many of their concerns will be alleviated. Care must be given though to ensure that ORHA/CPA does not duplicate efforts that are already underway.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I want to thank all those who helped make my trip possible. For security reasons I cannot mention people by name, but I am forever grateful for their assistance.

I also want to thank all the NGOs who are providing humanitarian assistance in Iraq. The people who work and volunteer for these organizations are extremely dedicated. They work long hours and give up the many comforts of home to serve others, often in very dangerous places around the globe, like Iraq and Afghanistan. They are a special breed and deserve our thanks and praise.

Finally, I want to thank several members of my staff for their help in putting together this report. Dan Scandling, my chief of staff, accompanied me on trip and served as photographer. Janet Shaffron, my legislative director, edited the report and Colin Samples did the layout and design. ■

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Congressman Frank R. Wolf represents Virginia's 10th District in the United States House of Representatives. He is the chairman of the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Subcommittee and is co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.